GUIDELINES FOR ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS:
DEPARTMENTS AND CATEGORY 1 PUBLIC BODIES

Issued: February 2004

105-05839/

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Reporting Overview 1

Production Standards 2

Suggested Report Contents 4

Critical Dates 5

Appendix A: Tabling Requirements 6

Appendix B: Glossary 7

Appendix C: Guidelines for Departmental Financial Information 10

Appendix D: Style Guide 11

INTRODUCTION

This document applies to Category 1 public bodies and government departments, hereafter referred to collectively as "entities". These guidelines provide a framework to enable each entity to present a concise, coherent, and consistent picture of its goals and progress towards annual objectives. It is an explanation of the reporting component of the provincial policy, outlined in *Achieving Excellence 2000: a Guidebook for the Improved Accountability of Public Bodies*, which can be found at http://www.gov.nf.ca/ComptrollerGeneral/divisions/accountability_pubs.html.

All entities should have strategic plans, which provide the foundation for annual performance reports. Many entities have been preparing annual reports without specific guidelines other than the suggestions offered in *Excellence in Governance: A Handbook for Public Sector Bodies*; these guidelines will fill that void.

The *Guidelines to Annual Performance Reporting: Departments and Category 1 Public Bodies* are provided for use by all Departments and Category 1 public bodies, which are subject to the same reporting requirements. While the guidelines are intended to provide a consistent foundation for all annual performance reports, they may be customized as necessary to suit the purposes of individual entities. The guidelines present a general format, and do not provide overly prescriptive instructions for preparing annual performance reports. To ensure that reports are reader-friendly and accessible to the public, annual reports should not exceed 20 pages in length.

Annual performance reports provide a great opportunity to communicate progress and achievements to the public. Entities will be expected to present meaningful, complete, and accurate reports with an emphasis on quality in writing and production standards. The Accountability Office of Treasury Board and Cabinet Secretariat will provide advice to entities upon request.

REPORTING OVERVIEW

Reporting Principles

- provide a coherent and balanced picture of progress that is concise and clear
- link progress to earlier commitments, and explain any changes
- set progress in context
- link resources to outcomes
- explain why the public can have confidence in the report

Annual performance reporting is the formal vehicle that government uses to communicate with the public and the legislature, and is an integral part of the governance process. It provides essential support to decision-making, program and policy improvement, and public accountability. Annual performance reports can promote a better understanding of the entity's strategic and policy directions. It is important to present information on the effects and effectiveness of the entity's policies and programs. Reporting must relate to

broader public accountability and transparency. It does not exist independently, but plays an important role in governance through the strategic planning cycle.

Through the strategic planning process that has been undertaken over the last few years, entities are developing the capability to identify, measure, and report on progress toward achieving stated goals. There is a fine balance between reporting accurate, useful information, and providing the public with infinite detail on every initiative undertaken in the reporting period. Presenting too much detail about too many topics may serve only to complicate and obscure the message. We are asking that annual performance reports be used to clearly and concisely provide meaningful information, based on the objectives in the strategic plan, to the public in a brief, readable document.

Annual performance reports should present information on the outcomes of your activities in a way that helps readers to understand the context and purpose. For this reason, communications personnel, where they exist, should be involved in preparing the annual performance report.

The distinction is made between annual reports that may not include actual comment on outcomes versus annual performance reports that specify whether goals and objectives were achieved. These guidelines are referring to annual performance reports as outlined in *Achieving Excellence 2000: A Guidebook for the Improved Accountability of Public Bodies.* It is recognized that performance reporting is evolving. However, each entity should strive in each subsequent year to come closer, to reporting the desired and actual outcomes than it did in the previous year. The expectations outlined in the provincial policy should be fully implemented by March 2005. To gain a better understanding of the expectations please refer to the responsibilities outlined on page 17 of *Achieving Excellence 2000: A Guidebook for the Improved Accountability of Public Bodies.*

PRODUCTION STANDARDS

It is recommended that all entities follow the same general format and the same publication standards. While each entity is different, and the guidelines may be open to interpretation, it is suggested that the layout advice and length restrictions be followed, provided that they are suitable for the entities' needs.

Acknowledging that most of the background information (mission, vision, lines of business) is already available in strategic plans, it is necessary to provide readers with goals and yearly objectives and any background information that would enable them to understand the factors influencing policy directions, implementation

Annual Performance Report Checklist

To what extent does the report

- provide a coherent and balanced picture of progress that is concise and clear?
- link progress to earlier commitments, and explain any changes?
- set progress in context?
- link resources to outcomes?
- explain why the public can have confidence in the report?

strategies, progress to date, and the general environment in which the organization is operating. The annual performance report is an opportunity to enhance public understanding of your entity and its strategic issues. Documents are to be produced (written and printed) by each individual entity. Minimum production standards are provided to facilitate consistent report production, but these may be customized as necessary to suit the purposes of individual entities.

The Communications and Consultation Branch of Executive Council has developed a common graphic layout to be used by all entities. Reports should employ a very simple structure, following the format provided below. The aim is to create a document that is readable, understandable, and visually appealing.

Page Layout:

- All margins: 1"
- Type should be 12 point (excluding headings) and in a standard font such as Times New Roman or Arial
- Entity name and page numbers should appear in footers (beginning after the table of contents)
- Allow sufficient white space - text should not appear crowded

The Accountability Office and Cabinet Secretariat are available to provide advice to departmental coordinators and public body personnel, as necessary.

Electronic Publication Standards

Electronic publication standards are available from the Communications and Consultation Branch of Executive Council and are available through the departmental or Accountability Framework coordinator. Annual performance reports may be posted on the entity's Web site. Some entities have their own Web sites, in which case their own Web publication standards should be used. Electronic and printed versions must be consistent.

SUGGESTED REPORT CONTENTS

FORMAT

1. Table of Contents (½ page)
2. Minister's/Chairperson's Message (including mandate - 1 page)
3. Entity Overview (1 page)
   a. Vision
   b. Mission
   c. Lines of Business
   d. Number of Employees
   e. Physical Location
   f. Other Key Statistics
4. Shared Commitments (1 to 2 pages)
5. Highlights and Accomplishments (outputs) (either 1 to 1.5 pages, or dispersed throughout report)
6. Outcomes of Objectives (5 to 6 pages)
   a. Strategic Issues
   b. Goals and Relevant Objectives
   c. Progress and Accomplishments (outcomes)
7. Opportunities and Challenges Ahead (1 page)
8. Financial Statements

Minister's or Board Chairperson's Message - ½ page

The Message should provide a take the form of a transmittal letter, and should not be used to comment on the content or quality of the report. Ideally, the Message could appear on half of one page, with the Table of Contents on the other half of the same page.

Departmental/Public Body Overview - 1 page

The Departmental or Public Body Overview should be presented immediately after the Message, and include the entity's vision, mission, lines of business, as well as other key statistics, such as the number of employees, physical location (including regional representation), and brief, general description of revenues and expenditures (e.g,. this could be presented in two small pie charts).

Shared Commitments - 1 to 2 pages

This section provides an opportunity to explain how others influence your strategic plan (e.g., industry, government departments, public bodies) and how the organization's strategic issues are influenced by that overlap. For example, if your organization's plan identified a strategic issue that your organization is unable to address autonomously, you may wish to indicate how you work with your partners to address this issue. This is an optional component that may be used to address individual needs.

Highlights/Accomplishments - 1 to 1½ pages (or dispersed throughout report)

This section highlights accomplishments and good news stories over the reporting period, while presenting a balanced picture. This does not include a discussion of the outcomes of strategic objectives.

Outcomes of Objectives - 5 to 6 pages

For each strategic issue from your plan, state (i) the goal, (ii) the relevant objective and (iii) and results and benefits to the people of the province based on the information gathered from your performance measures and indicators.

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead - 1 page

This section would allow the entity to briefly inform readers about potential obstacles or opportunities that are likely to arise in the near future which could influence your organization's strategic issues or directions.

Financial Statements

Where appropriate, the audited financial Statements should be included and as well there should be a brief explanation (of approximately one paragraph) of the overall deviation from the projected results. The auditor would approve this presentation before it is published. A public body that has separately released its audited financial statements may provide a summary of its financial statements information in the annual performance report. Guidelines for Departmental financial information are provided in Appendix C.

CRITICAL DATES TO BE CONFIRMED WITH CABINET SECRETARIAT OR THE ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

All entities are expected to table annual performance reports 6 months after the year end unless otherwise stated in legislation.

Two copies of the annual report should be submitted to the Accountability Office prior to or at the time of tabling.

1. **Expectations**: All entities are expected to table reports annually as follows:
Departments: Annual Performance Reports
Category 1 Public Bodies: Annual Performance Reports
Category 2 Public Bodies: Annual Reports*
Category 3 Public Bodies: Annual Activity Reports*

**separate guidelines for the preparation of annual reports are available for these categories.*

Exceptions to the rule: Entities which are inactive may be included in the responsible department's annual report.

2. **Timing**: All departments and public bodies are expected to table reports within six months of their fiscal year end unless specified in legislation

3. **Type of version**: Copies must be printed versions. Electronic versions are not acceptable.

4. **Number of copies**: 54 copies must be provided unless otherwise specified by the responsible Minister (in certain cases more then 54 copies may be required).

5. **Process**: *When the House of Assembly is*

open:
- Consult with the Clerk of the House of Assembly.
- The assigned personnel in the responsible department should prepare the transmittal letter to accompany reports to be tabled (normally this will be done in consultation with the Department's Director of Communications).
- The Minister should ensure the tabling is placed on the agenda for the House through the Government House Leader.
- The Clerk of the House of Assembly would ensure the reports are distributed to the members of the House of Assembly.
- Any excess reports may be delivered to the Legislative Library.

closed:
- Consult with the Clerk of the House of Assembly.
- The reports should be delivered to the Speaker of the House of Assembly and to the Clerk of the House of the Assembly.
- The Clerk of the House of Assembly would ensure the reports are distributed to the members of the House of Assembly.
- A record is kept to verify that the reports have been tabled.
- Any excess reports may be delivered to the Legislative Library.

Exceptions to the rule: When the House is dissolved (e.g., when there is an election) reports are held until the House of Assembly is reconstituted.

Where the relevant legislation for an entity specifies another process.
Where otherwise directed by Cabinet Secretariat.

Accountability
A relationship based on the obligation to demonstrate and take responsibility for performance in light of agreed expectations.

Accountability Framework
The accountability framework defines the nature and scope of responsibilities, identification of key results, performance expectations, and the monitoring and reporting strategies.

Activities
Activities are the actions that transform the various inputs or resources into outputs.

Baseline
Baseline data is a series of values over the time collected before , or at the time a program comes into effect, or as an event occurs.

Benchmarks
Benchmarks are the standards against which the outcomes will be measured.

Challenges
Those events, activities, processes, strategies, policies, and leadership qualities that the organization must first overcome if it is to achieve its intended goals and objectives.

Goal
A goal is a general statement of the desired results to be achieved over a specified period of time.

Indicator
An indicator is an aspect of a measure which will be assessed.

Key Issue
Key issues are the most significant external or internal factors which the organization must manage to realize its mission and goals and the capacity of the organization to effectively manage the impacts of those factors.

Lines of Business
Lines of business are discrete and coherent sets of programs, services and/or products that represent what the organization delivers to its external clients.

Mandate

Instruction given by an authorizing body which sets out the general parameters of a task to be undertaken.

Measures
Measures are the attributes which are evaluated in order to determine whether the expected have been achieved.

Mission
a brief, clear statement which provides an anchor pont for developing and assessing goals, objectives and strategies. It is an outcome oriented statement which answers the questions who, what and why, focusing work in the short term (approximately two iterations of strategic planning).

Objective
An objective is a specific target or milestone which is set to incrementally improve achievement toward the goal. Success in meeting the objectives can be readily evaluated using qualitative and quantitative measures.

Outcome
The desired result (for example a change in behaviour).

Output
What is produced as a direct result of transforming resources through an activity or process.

Performance Measurement
Performance Measurement is a process, which focuses on the desired quantitative and qualitative data, required for the organization to meet its mission, and goals.

Performance Report
A summary of the organization's operations which provides a clear linkage between the strategic plan and the outcomes actually obtained using the specified performance measures.

Program
A program is a grouping of activities with a common purpose, common clients and/or common outcomes.

Public Body
A board, corporation, commission or similar body, established by order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, under an Act of Legislature, or Minute of Council.

Strategic Planning
A systematic process designed to help analyze fundamental issues and policy choices, define strategies, prioritize goals and objectives, and ensure these goals and objectives are translated into concrete actions, and performance is measured and reported.

Values
Values are the fundamental principles that guide behaviour and decision making.

Vision
A vision is a short statement describing the ideal state an organization is striving to achieve for its clients.

If the Public Accounts have not been formally released prior to the tabling of your annual performance report, financial information for your department may be accessed from the Oracle financial system for purposes of meeting any tabling deadline.

Any reference in your annual performance report to expenditures and revenues should be sourced from your department's financial results as obtained from the Oracle system. As well, inclusion of such information should specifically reference the following disclosure which must be included in your department's annual performance report:

> ***Expenditure and revenue figures (cash-based) included in this document are based on draft information, as the Public Accounts had not yet been formally released. Readers are cautioned that these figures may be subject to adjustment.***

In the event that the Public Accounts are formally released prior to submission of your report, Public Accounts figures should be used and the following disclosure must be included in your department's annual performance report:

> ***Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on the Public Accounts.***

Note: If accrual-based information is provided (also applies to assets/liabilities) the disclosure wording should be adjusted accordingly.

All public bodies should follow the style points outlined in the guidelines to ensure some level of consistency among all public body reports.

- Avoid jargon and lengthy sentences. If it is necessary to use a technical term, ensure that it is explained properly.
- Use the active versus passive voice (e.g., "we wrote the reports" vs. "the reports were written by us").
- Ensure that tense is correct and consistent. The annual report refers to activities already completed, so the past tense is appropriate.
- Write the fiscal year as **2002-03**. Follow this format for other fiscal years referenced.
- Use **per cent** not % (except when used in a table or graphics).
- Write out numbers when under 10 (nine) and when at the beginning of a sentence (Thirty-seven people...) But for 10 and over, use digits. Do not use "ten (10)".
- Numbers larger than 999 use commas to prevent the number from being separated across two lines.
- Do not use "th" with a date - not June 17th, but June 17.
- When just using month and year, do not use a comma to separate the month and year (January 2002).
- Use "and" not "&".
- When using the full name of an act, use italics (*Gasoline Tax Act*).
- For purposes of the annual report, Government, Province, and Department may be capitalized when standing alone. Use "province" when referring to the geographic area.
- Avoid the use of etc., e.g., and i.e.
- If using an acronym, ensure that it is spelled out on first use. Avoid the use of too many unfamiliar acronyms.

- Use hyphens to make it obvious when words work together as a single adjective conveying a single idea (one-year trades-related program).